

## **STLI001-07 Ferry Prospectus**

**Answers to questions from Pat McGeehan, NY Times reporter**

**January 30, 2007**

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### **1. The RFP leaves the impression that you are largely satisfied with the transportation service you have. Are you?**

*There is always room for improvement. The NPS has outlined its desires for the next contract in the Prospectus. Some of the requirements are the same as in the existing contract and some are new. The new services authorized in the Prospectus are intended to improve visitor experiences and services in all aspects of the ferry service operation. Once these new services go into effect, we are confident that from trip planning through the point of purchase and from embarkation and on to the ferries, our visitors will have a fuller, more educational and satisfying experience than currently offered.*

### **2. Why aren't you inviting bidders to propose a wholesale revision of the existing service?**

*The primary objective for the service is the safe and convenient transportation of our visitors to and from the Park. To improve the overall visitor experience and expand customer service, NPS has required and authorized specific services in the draft contract with an emphasis on visitor service, visitor experience, and educational opportunities. By law, the National Park Service is required to establish the minimum requirements of the draft contract. Under the terms of the draft contract, the ferry operator will be required to offer an island cruise, provide audio tours and run a reservation and ticketing system. The contract also allows for the NPS to authorize the concessioner awarded the contract to offer additional ferry routes to the other national parks in and around New York harbor.*

*The Prospectus, particularly the Proposal Package, requests offerors to propose their ideas to enhance both the required and authorized services identified.*

### **3. Visitors complain about the long lines for security and the condition of the facilities and boats. What changes are you looking for to address those complaints?**

*The business opportunity section of the Prospectus describes the requirements related to visitor handling, ticketing, the establishment of a reservation system and enhancement to the visitor experience overall. We expect that the reservation and ticketing system required under the draft contract will help address many of the concerns related to ticket lines. The Prospectus generally outlines how NPS is looking to address these issues. In addition, Principal Selection Factor 2, Subfactor 2a asks the offerors to describe the ticketing and reservation system they intend to use for the operation. Subfactor 2b asks for a strategy and implementation plan for better distributing park visitation throughout the year by encouraging visitation during off peak hours and days, from underutilized embarkation facilities, and from untapped markets, another way to address these*

*concerns. Subfactor 2c asks offerors to address improvements to the visitor experience from trip planning, ticket purchasing, pre-boarding and waiting, time on board the vessels, to conclusion at the debarkation point.*

*As far as security, the National Park Service will continue to explore ways to improve this sometimes inconvenient, yet necessary phase of the visitor experience. The NPS continually looks for ways to improve the security screening areas and process. We are continuing to evaluate the equipment and procedures used as well as the physical facilities to identify options for expediting the process without compromising the integrity of the screening.*

**4. Why would a new operator have to buy the existing boats, two of which are more than 40 years old?**

*The terms of the existing contract, CC-STLI001-89, included in the Prospectus, Appendix A, describes these requirements. This requirement is typical of contracts done under the 1965 Concessions Policy Act.*

**5. How will the price paid for the fleet be determined if a new operator is selected? Would the buyer have to pay that price up front or is there a possibility of financing it through the park service?**

*The actual purchase price for all marine and non-marine personal property and inventory will be negotiated by the Existing Concessioner and its successor. The process and compensation due to the existing concessioner, in addition to the arbitration process, is outlined in the existing contract, CC-STLI001-89.*

*The National Park Service does not provide financing.*

**6. Doesn't the demand that another operator buy those boats obviate the possibility of an upgrade of the fleet? Wouldn't you prefer to have newer, more comfortable, more efficient, less polluting boats?**

*In the prospectus it is “assumed that none of the existing boats will need to be replaced over the next contract period [page 31].” However, the terms of the prospectus and the draft contract allow proposals for additional vessels to provide the authorized and required service(s). Furthermore, Principal Selection Factor 1, Subfactor 1a: Natural Resources ask offerors to describe how their proposed operations would be managed to help protect the water quality, air quality, soundscape, and other natural resources, including retrofits, updates or modifications to the vessels, and any proposals for additions or replacements to the vessels.*

**7. How likely is it that the park service would allow access to Liberty or Ellis from other sites than the two in use now? The deputy mayor says this RFP leaves open the possibility that the NPS would let another contract for ferry service to the statue from somewhere else in the city. Is that the intent?**

*We have no specific plans at this time to offer ferry service to the Park from any points other than as described in the prospectus – “...in, adjoining, or in close proximity to Battery Park (Manhattan) in New York and Liberty State Park in New Jersey.”*

*However, the Park has been working with the New York City Mayor’s Harbor District Advisory Board to identify new audiences and experiences in New York Harbor. As part of this initiative, at some point in the future, this might include access from other locations in the Harbor. The purpose would be to attract new audiences not to disperse existing visitors.*

*36 CFR sec. 51.77 states that a concession contract “will not provide in any manner an exclusive right to provide all or certain types of visitor services in a park or area.”*

**8. Is the security checkpoint in Battery Park limiting visitation to the islands? How and why?**

*The security screening process limits visitation because there is a limit to how many people can be screened at any one time, so some vessels depart at less than full capacity. For that reason, we are looking at ways to expedite the process and spread visitation more evenly throughout the day and year.*

**9. What changes are you willing to consider to increase and ease visitation?**

*Principal Selection Factor 2 (Subfactor 2b) addresses the objectives of the NPS in this area. As discussed, we are inviting offerors to discuss in their proposals ways to better distribute park visitation throughout the year, encouraging visitation during off peak hours and days, from underutilized embarkation points, and from untapped markets. In addition, the island cruise required under the draft contract will provide Park visitors with another option to experience the Park. Visitors will now have the alternative to riding the primary ferry boats and may experience the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island from the water without disembarking on the islands, particularly when island or boat capacity is reached, and to have an interpretive experience when the islands are closed.*

**10. What is the status of negotiations to move the screening operation to Pier A?**

*The NPS has been and continues to explore alternatives to the current temporary screening facility in use, however no decisions have been finalized at this time.*

**11. How many bids are you expecting? How many prospective bidders have indicated interest?**

*We cannot predict the number of offers we will receive. Sixteen entities were represented at the site visit but we don't have clear information on the level of interest.*

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